JOINT PRESS RELEASE

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force,
contact: David M. Smith (202) 332-6483 ext. 3309,
pager (800) 757-7736

Human Rights Campaign Fund
contact: Doug Hattaway (202) 628-4160

Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum
contact: Mandy Carter (202) 628-4160

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
contact: Suzanne Goldberg (212) 995-8585

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RADICAL RIGHT FAILS TO QUALIFY IN 8 OUT OF 10 STATES

OREGON AND IDAHO FACE INITIATIVES THAT LEGALIZE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GAY PEOPLE

Washington, D.C. (July 12, 1994) -- Radical Right wing groups in eight states failed to qualify ballot measures that would have legalized discrimination against gay people, said representatives of four national gay and lesbian groups at a briefing in Washington, D.C. Initiatives in two states, Oregon and Idaho, qualified for the ballot. While the Oregon measure has been struck from the ballot by a state judge, that ruling is being appealed.

"We are relieved, but not relaxed," said Sue Hyde, Fight the Right Project Coordinator for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). "The failure of the Radical Right to qualify in eight states is positive, but it should not send the 'all clear' signal."

Radical Right groups in Arizona, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, and Washington failed to gather the required signatures by deadlines that ranged from January 31st to July 11th. The initiative in Florida was ruled invalid by that state's Supreme Court in March, 1994. An announced initiative effort in Ohio never materialized, but the group announced plans for a project attacking politicians who have been supportive of equal rights for gay people.

"Our job now is to support local communities as they come together to counter the discriminatory agenda of national Radical Right wing organizations," said Tim McFeeley, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "We will work in close cooperation with local communities in Oregon, Idaho, and wherever Radical Right groups try to institutionalize discrimination. We must reach people with information about the problem of anti-gay discrimination and pass a federal bill to protect people from losing their jobs to discrimination."

Mandy Carter of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum said "National radical groups have divided communities by trying to institutionalize discrimination. Their cynical strategy is best challenged by the truth. People of color communities are an important part of the effort to expose the discriminatory agenda of the Radical Right."

Nicole LeFavour, an official with the Idaho Campaign for Human Dignity, the group that will be opposing that state's discriminatory measure noted that

the Idaho initiative barely qualified. "The Idaho anti-gay group fell far short of its goal of 100,000 signatures and squeaked past with only a few thousand to spare," said LeFavour. "Unfortunately, this gives the national Radical Right wing organizations an opportunity to take their disinformation campaign all over our state. Local communities in Idaho must come together to stop the Radical Right groups from institutionalizing censorship and discrimination in Idaho.

Oregon's ballot measure was struck down as unconstitutional by Marion County (Or.) Circuit court in April 1994. Judge Rodney Miller ruled that an initiative limiting the rights of gay people cannot appear on the November ballot because it violates the state constitution, which requires that an initiative deal with a single issue. The decision is currently on appeal to a higher court.

"The courts continue to tell us that citizens cannot vote lesbians and gay men out of constitutions, " said Suzanne Goldberg, a staff attorney for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "Still, the Radical Right continues to promote these unconstitutional assaults, and we will continue to battle against them in court."

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FROM GROUND ZERO:

There are indications that the national campaign of disinformation and intolerance being waged by Colorado for Family Values, largely through mass informational crunch organizations like Focus on the Family and its Family Research Council, is being recognized for what it is--a campaign to vilify and dehumanize a group of people and then to eliminate them from viable participation in society and government.

We at Ground Zero know that these small victories do not significantly reduce the threat and we have no intention of reducing our efforts. Rather, we know that much of the campaign on the Right is taking a new, frightening direction that will try to disguise its true agenda and goals and, thus, deceive the people of the nation. Across the country, Radical Right and Politicized Fundamentalist are being encouraged to hide their true agendas in order to get elected to or appointed to positions of political trust and there stand ready to join the crusade against religious freedom and tolerance.

The recent Colorado for Family Values" Glen Eyrie Conference was full of such suggestions. Ground Zero asks simply, "If your goals are lofty and in the best interest of the people, why must you hide them from the people in order to promote them?"

Franklin Whitworth, Ground Zero Spokesperson 1-719-635-6086